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REVIEWS OF BOOKS

James Baird Weaver (Iowa Biographical Series). By Fred Emory Haynes. (Iowa City, Iowa, The State Historical Society, 1919. xv, 494 p. Portraits.)

The biography of any man who represents a group, large or small, or who typifies a movement of whatever significance in the development of a people, adds materially to available information of social advance in its more comprehensive aspects. General Weaver was not merely representative of an important group; he was perhaps its most outstanding leader, and he embodied as did no other single individual the essence of a movement which has manifested itself in our national development from early colonial days down to the present moment. A study of the life of such a man is something which is worth doing and doing well. Mr. Haynes, in bringing the principal facts of Weaver's life to the attention of students of American development, has added significantly to the readily available material on the agrarian unrest and its causes, as well as on that period which has as yet been inadequately treated by those who have attempted to outline the story of national progress in the last quarter of the nineteenth century. All in all, Mr. Haynes has performed his task intelligently and well.

Two rather short chapters cover Weaver's career down to the outbreak of the Civil War, three more chapters outline his part in that great struggle, and practically all the remainder of the book is devoted to Weaver as a factor in political life. Starting with his activities in the ranks of the Republican party, the author traces in considerable detail General Weaver's career as a political leader in his own state of Iowa, his three terms in Congress, and his campaigns for the presidency. His defection from the older party to join the Greenbackers, the decline of their movement, the carrying forward of certain essential planks from their platform, and the merging of different elements, to a large degree guided by General Weaver, into the People's party of the nineties are presented in order and with much attention to what at times becomes rather wearisome detail.

Mr. Haynes found no vast body of source material for the biography; a brief sketch of his earlier life written by the general in later days, a scrapbook of newspaper clippings, and a small number of unprinted letters afforded so scanty an amount of first hand evidence, that Weaver's printed speeches, both in Congress and out, have been forced into an undue prominence. The very paucity of personal material, exclusive of such speeches, placed upon the author a heavy task which he met by making long and frequent excerpts from sources available to anyone who has access to the *Congressional Record*. When these are used to exemplify different phases of General Weaver's activities, ample justification exists; but when, as so frequently is the case, little if anything new is developed, such prodigality of quotation produces a feeling of monotony. General Weaver's reaction to the various monetary issues was much the same in 1886 as it had been when he addressed his colleagues in the United States House of Representatives in 1876.

Since Weaver was a leader of a cause greater than himself, it would seem not out of place to devote more attention to the setting, even at the expense of some pages of congressional oratory. To describe at greater length the economic depression in the Mississippi Valley in the eighties and the reaction of the agrarian element to that condition might be repetition of what has been written elsewhere, but it would serve to heighten the effect of the leader's attempt to voice that discontent and at the same time would bring his services into stronger relief. More of the story of farmers' alliances, agricultural unions and wheels, labor uneasiness, and their mutual interaction might be told with no loss to the treatment of the central theme. Furthermore, on the broader topic, there still remains a mass of material as yet unused which would have enriched a biography of this nature. The Donnelly Papers of the Minnesota Historical Society, for example, contain a wealth of unexploited material bearing directly on this issue. Local and evanescent publications, of which the times produced so ample a store, form a treasury on which the student of farmers' economic problems and their political consequences may draw without fear of exhausting the supply.

It is doubtless of no avail to add yet another protest against an editorial policy which persists in relegating to certain pages

in the back of the book what customarily forms the footnotes in other publications. The careful student will turn to these pages to ascertain whence the writer derived certain facts on which he based certain conclusions, but he will do so reluctantly, regretting that all the world cannot see eye to eye with himself.

LESTER BURRELL SHIPPEE

With the Colors from Anoka County. By Roe Chase. (1919.

175 p. Illustrations.)

Goodhue County in the World War. (Red Wing, Minnesota, Red Wing Printing Company, 1919. 192, 55a p. Illustrations.)

Waseca County, Minnesota, in the World War. (Waseca, Minnesota, *Journal Radical*, 1919. 224 p. Illustrations.)

In the World War, 1917-1918-1919: Watonwan County, Minnesota. Edited by Will Curtis. (St. James, Minnesota, *St. James Plaindealer*. Illustrations.)

In commemoration of the services rendered by the people of their several counties in the prosecution of the late war, local publishers throughout the state are compiling and printing county war histories. Among the first of these to appear are the volumes which contain the war records of Anoka, Goodhue, Waseca, and Watonwan counties. A general similarity of purpose and content naturally characterizes the group. Each book is dedicated primarily "to the memory of those men . . . who gave their lives that this world might be a better place in which to live." A major part of each volume is devoted to individual photographs and brief statements of the services of soldiers, sailors, marines, and nurses from the county. In another main section is given some account of the war work done by organizations and individuals in the home community, accompanied by photographs of local leaders and committees and by other illustrative material. Something of the general course of events which occasioned these activities, and in the shaping of which some of the men from the county directly participated, is indicated by the inclusion of historical resumés, chronologies, or reports relating to the World War, and of portraits of the military and political leaders of the United States and of the allied nations. Somewhere in the book